

# Office of Attorney General Terry Goddard



STATE OF ARIZONA  
DEPARTMENT OF LAW  
1275 W. WASHINGTON STREET  
PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007-2926  
[WWW.AZAG.GOV](http://WWW.AZAG.GOV)

ANDREA M. ESQUER  
PRESS SECRETARY  
PHONE: (602) 542-8019  
CELL PHONE: (602) 725-2200

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Attorney General Files Discrimination Suit Against Foundation**

(Phoenix, Ariz. – Nov. 16, 2006) The Attorney General's Office today announced it filed a lawsuit against the Indo-American Cultural & Religious Foundation of Arizona, alleging it discriminated against a Phoenix man because of his national origin.

Specifically, the lawsuit alleges that Freddy Saavedra, 28, and his fiancée Laura Bejar (now Saavedra), reserved the Foundation's hall in March 2004 for their wedding reception scheduled for March 12, 2005. The couple paid the Foundation a \$1,250 deposit.

In February 2005, the Foundation accepted a reservation for the same day and time as the Saavedra wedding reception and a \$1,000 deposit from someone of Indian descent. The Foundation then cancelled Saavedra's reservation, explaining it had "double-booked" the hall, located at 2809 W. Maryland Ave. in Phoenix. The Foundation returned \$1,000 of Saavedra's deposit.

Saavedra, who is Hispanic, filed a complaint with the Attorney General's Office Civil Rights Division. Following an investigation, the Division concluded there was reasonable cause to believe the Foundation violated the Arizona Civil Rights Act by canceling Saavedra's reservation in favor of the person of Indian descent.

The Foundation denies it discriminates against any person because of his or her national origin or ancestry.

The Arizona Civil Rights Act (ACRA) prohibits organizations that offer public accommodations from discriminating against a person on the basis of national origin or ancestry. Discrimination includes directly or indirectly withholding or denying accommodations, advantages, facilities or privileges because of a person's national origin or ancestry.

The lawsuit alleges that by canceling Saavedra's reservation in favor of one for a person of Indian national origin, the Foundation denied Saavedra use of the hall in violation of the ACRA. Additionally, the person who ultimately rented the hall was charged about \$2,900 less than the amount Saavedra was going to be charged.

The Attorney General's Office is asking the Maricopa County Superior Court to:

- Reimburse Saavedra for actual damages caused by canceling the contract.
- Impose a civil penalty of not more than \$5,000 for violating the Arizona Civil Rights Act.
- Order the Foundation to stop any practices that may be discriminatory.
- Order the State to monitor the Foundation's compliance with the Arizona Civil Rights Act.

The Arizona Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination in public accommodations based on a person's disability, race, color, religion, sex, familial status or national origin. Anyone who believes that their civil rights have been violated should call the Arizona Attorney General's Office Division of Civil Rights toll-free at 1-877-491-5742.

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